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THE HILL O' DREAMS

AND OTHER VERSES
BY HELEN LANYON



NEW YORK: JOHN LANE
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1910

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Publisher

MAR 1 1911

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DEDICATION

I know the sea is breaking at your feet, I like to think that for your gentle sake he spreads his treasure out upon the sand, his treasure of rounded stones and shining shells. He pulled for you those bunches of brown weed, from deep mysterious gardens, far below the sunlight and the swaying waves.

You will not stop to look? The sea will come again at evening, climbing the beach with slow reluctant feet, to take away his unheeded gifts.

But only to bring more upon the morrow, for some day, who can tell? It may be that you will stoop and take a shell into your white hand.

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THE HILL O' DREAMS AND OTHER VERSES

THE HILL O' DREAMS

My grief ! for the days that's by an' done,
When I was a young girl straight an' tall,
Comin' alone at set o' sun,

Up the high hill road from Cushendall.
I thought the miles no hardship then,
Nor the long road weary to the feet ;
For the thrushes sang in the deep green glen,
An' the evenin' air was cool an' sweet.

My head with many a thought was throng,
And many a dream as I never told,
My heart would lift at a wee bird's song,
Or at seein' a whin bush crowned with gold.
And always I'd look back at the say,
'Or the turn o' the road shut out the sight
Of the long waves curlin' into the bay,
An' breakin' in foam where the sands is white.

I was married young on a dacent man,
As many would call a prudent choice,
But he never could hear how the river ran
Singin' a song in a changin' voice ;
Nor thought to see on the bay's blue wather
A ship with yellow sails unfurled,
Bearin' away a King's young daughter
Over the brim of the heavin' world.

The way seems weary now to my feet,
An' miles bes many, an' dreams bes few :
The evenin' air's not near so sweet,
The birds don't sing as they used to do
An' I'm that tired at the top o' the hill,
That I haven't the heart to turn at all,
To watch the curlin' breakers fill
The wee round bay at Cushendall.

THE OULD CAUBEEN

HANGIN' on a nail
There, fornenst the door,
Is the ould caubeen
That my Hughie wore.

All the clothes he had,
An' brogues as good as new,
I gave my sisther's son,
As was named for Hugh.

But thon ould caubeen,
Grey wi' age an' weather,
I kep' to bring to mind
Times we'd had together.

And, on winter nights,
When the lamp burns dim,
I let slip my work,
For to dhrame of him.

Till I almost hear
On the loanin' long,
Hughie's hearty voice,
In a bit o' song.

And his greetin' word—
“How's yourself, Bridgeen?”
As he shakes the rain
From his ould caubeen.

Och ! its foolishness
For me, as earns me bread,
To be sittin' still,
Thinkin' of the dead.

Some folks saves their bit,
Some has stock an' lands
Some has growin' sons
Willin' with their hands.

I've my memories—
And, for all my store,
Hughie's ould caubeen,
There, fornenst the door.

THE GIRL WITHOUT A DOWER

I STAND to watch her comin' down the street,
Her hair's as yellow as the whin in flower ;
She steps out proudly on her two bare feet,
The girl without a dower.

You never see her but she's by her lone,
She will not stop to turn a friendly word ;
She has not one thraneen to call her own,
Nor wool nor linen stored.

The other girls are glad to laugh and sing
Or have a crack with neighbour boys that pass ;
You'd think she was the daughter of a King
And not a poor young lass.

I'd like to take her quickly by the hand,
And kiss her red lip with its scornful curl,
And make her mistress of my house and land
And she—a servin' girl.

I'd like to wed her with a ring of gold,
And dress her grandly in a silken shawl,
The way my roof might keep her from the cold
An' rain, an' dews an' all.

An' she should do no work at all, but rest,
An' sometimes bend her proud head like a flower
To strew her yellow curls upon my breast,
The girl without a dower.

SHIPWRECK

WE drew Shawn out of the eager sea,
And dragged him on to the sand ;
The only one of a crew of three
That the waves brought back to land.

We carried him up into the town,
His young wife stood at her door,
We said no word as we laid him down
And left them alone once more.

The mother of Conor sits all day
And watches the breaking wave,
And the cruel waters of the bay
That make her son's wild grave.

The old net-mender creeps from the shore
And goes to his work again ;
His grandson Phelim will come no more
To help with the broken seine.

And up in the town the neighbours sigh
For the wife and her child unborn,
For they hear her making bitter cry :—
“ *Oh Shawn, my husband Shawn !* ”

THE CLAMBERIN' BRIAR

I WAS leanin' over my door one night,
An' lookin' up an' down,
When a travellin' stranger came in sight,
With a fiddle old an' brown.

An' never a word to me he said,
Nor axed me his desire,
But stretched his arm above my head,
An' broke off a twig o' briar.

And away he went beneath the moon,
With the briar leaves on his breast,
Playin' a wild an' wanderin' tune,
His cheek to his fiddle pressed.

Folks does be passin' to an' fro
Even on these lonesome ways,
An' loaded carts in a lumberin' row
On fair an' market days.

But they never wear from the grey boreen
The track of the stranger's feet,
Nor shut from my ears at morn or e'en
The sound of his fiddlin' sweet.

The winter wind has stripped my tree,
But at nights beside the fire,
You'd wonder how strong it comes to me
The smell of the clamberin' briar.

MÁIRE

WHEN Máire at the fireside sits,
A farmer's lass in homespun dressed ;
I watch her as she sews or knits,
And there is hunger in my breast.

My thought is all a wand'ring dream,
I see her not as others may,
A young girl in the firelight's gleam,
Doing her work at close of day.

I see a queen all shod with gold,
And crowned with gems of glittering fire,
Her royal robes about her rolled,
Too great for any man's desire.

I see a saint whose holy eyes
Have looked beyond all evil things,
To catch in fields of Paradise
A sudden glint of rainbow wings.

And I am troubled in her sight,
My throat is choked with swelling tears,
The queen's too high, the saint's too white :—
I must go lonely all my years.

THE VALLEY OF TEARS

THERE's a little Irish village in the shadow of the
hill,
Where the folded valley turns towards the sea,
The wind is never weary there, the waves are never
still,
And there I dwell, and Sorrow dwells with me.

When all the folk are sleeping, and the silver-
fingered moon
Draws ghostly shadow-pictures on my blind,
I lie and chide the loitering dawn, and cry "Come
soon, ah soon,
That I may put my sorrow out of mind!"

And when the village wakens and I go into the
street,
And see the children playing in the sun,
And scent the far-off heather, and the near sweet
smell of peat,
I cry aloud "Would God the day were done!"

The golden sun is scattered on the lifting, shifting,
wave.
The shining pools are flooded by the tide,
And on the distant hillside the whin's as bright
and brave
As e'er it was before my lover died.

There's a little Irish village in the shadow of the
hill,

Where the folded valley turns towards the sea,
The wind is never weary there, the waves are
never still,

And there I dwell, and Sorrow dwells with me.

THE OULD SHUILER

God save you kindly ! Woman of the house,
You and your daughters, and the buachaill tall,
I've tramped the weary way from Donegall
Treadin' the cold dew on the mountain brows.

Your leave now for to sit beside your hearth,
Give me a sup of sweet milk, and some bread,
And I will tell you tales of love, and dhread
An' the wide wonders of the turnin' earth.

To the young girls a lovin' tale I'll tell,
Sweet as a droileen in a quicken-hedge,
Of how a king's son came from the world's edge
To court the Fairy-Woman of Moy Mell.

And for the buachaill I've a sthory brave
Of two bould armies that with spear an' sword,
Fought all day long beside the narrow ford,
Sheddin' their heart's blood on the runnin' wave.

An' woman, for yourself's the fancy sweet
Of how God's Mother goes with gentle tread,
Guidin' the steps of your young child that's dead
In and about o' Heaven's golden street.

An' when I'm done, I'll stand before yez all
An' pray the Lord when he be's recknin' up,
To mind the woman that gave bite an' sup
To the ould Shuiler out o' Donegall.

HAUNTED

At the wayside well I stooped down for to drink,
But the thirst was on me yet when I left the brink ;
For I would not put my lips to the water cool
While the face of a dead young girl looked out o'
the pool.

By the high moor-road I stopped to rest awhile,
For I had travelled many a heavy mile ;
But I rose up from the heather spent an' weak,
For the hand of a dead young girl had touched my
cheek.

An' once, where three roads met, I stopped to hear
A fiddlin' fellow makin' music clear,
But I wandered on before his tune was done,
For the voice of a dead young girl in the song
made moan.

So on, an' on I go, and have no rest
To ease the hungry sorrow of my breast ;
And always at my side I hear the tread
The swift light footsteps of a young girl dead.

THE HOUSE OF PÁDRAIG

MANY a time I see it, looking from the valley,
The little house of Pádraig on the weary moor,
Many a time I see himself bent above his labour,
Or sitting at dew-fall beside his lonely door.

Ne'er a foot but Pádraig's steps across the
threshold,
Ne'er a hand but Pádraig's lies upon the latch,
Over the dim windows a rose is running riot,
And the weed grows golden on the ragged thatch.

There is pity on me for the house of Pádraig,
For the untended hearth-stone with its cheerless
look,
And himself so lonely brooding in the twilight,
Or reading in the pages of a printed book.

If I had my longing I would climb the hillside
To the house of Pádraig ; I'd set wide the door,
I'd redd the ashy hearth-place, and set the dull
peat glowing,
And chase the scratching chickens from the
earthen floor.

I would cut the tangle from the little window,
And upon the ledging I'd put a pot of musk,
The crack'd delf I'd be scouring, I'd set the pan-
lids shining,
And sit and wait for Pádraig in the summer dusk.

When he'd come at evening labour-spent and weary,
To his lonely supper and his homestead drear,
From the ingle-shadow I would rise to greet him
Saying to him softly :—" Pádraig, I am here."

Idle is my fancy ; in the fertile valley
The field that is my dowry ripens day and night,
While my careful father counts the promised money,
And my anxious mother sews at linen white.

Sorrow take my plenty and my plighted promise,
All my thought goes climbing up the hillside far,
To the house of Pádraig, where a lighted window
Gleams upon the moorland like a yellow star.

DANNY O'SHANE

DANNY O'SHANE was a farmin' lad
Brought by my da from a hirin' fair ;
The one luck-shillin' was all he had,
No shoe to his foot, no hat to his hair.
But he'd sing like a bird in the face o' dawn,
And he'd sing at his work in the glowin' noon,
And he'd sing when the yellow dusk was drawn
Over the light o' the risin' moon.

When Danny O'Shane had milked the cows
An' stabled the ass in the wee ass-byre,
He would come singin' up to the house
With a creel o' peat to mend the fire.
An' stoopin' his head to the lintel low
In the name o' God he would wish me well ;
his voice would come ringin' rich an' low
an' swing in my heart like a silver bell.

Danny O'Shane, when the nights was warm,
An' the young stars climbin' over the hill,
Would gather the lads from field an' farm
An' sing to them in the evenin' still.
An' I'd creep to the door like a secret thing,
An' liftin' the latch without a noise,
Would stand at the crack to hear him sing.
As he sat among the farmin' boys.

Danny O'Shane has travelled West
Overseas to the stranger's land,
To sing the heart out from their breast,
And the yellow money out o' their hand.
But I cannot spin nor sew a seam,
My work is spoiled for thinkin' long ;
An' Danny O'Shane comes into my dream,
An' steals my soul with a simple song.

A CITY OF REFUGE

I KNOW a City of wondrous might,
It is called the City of Dreams and Night,
There I come at the close of day,
When the vanquished hours have fled away.
I strike my sword on the warder's bell,
Giving the word that we loved so well,
The little pass-word, short and low
That we made for our pleasure, long ago.

There in the City of Dreams I stay
Until the drums of the marching day
Beat up the hostile hours again,
The hostile hours that must be slain,
Before I can win to the towers white,
Of the wonderful City of Dreams and Night ;
And strike my sword on the warder's bell,
And hear the countersign :—" Pass, all's well.

FROM A FAR COUNTRY

THE world is full o' wand'rin' roads, but I am sick
for home :

My longin' is all for the low boreen that runs by
my mother's door,
I wish my feet was set on it, I wish that I was
come
In sight o' home once more.

Och ! there is sorrow on me, it sours my hard-won
bread,
It comes between me an' my rest, it burdens all
my days,
I am grievin' for my kindred, for the livin' an' the
dead
An' the old pleasant ways.

My eyes grow dim with cloudy dreams, the road
drops from my sight,
I feel no more the bitter wind that raves, an'
strikes, an' chills
I feel the breath of Irish air, I see the mellow light
On the blue Wicklow hills.

I see no more the weary clouds, weighted with
comin' snow,
Nor yet the rigid pine-trees above the frozen
steep
I see the silver Liffey, where the shinin' waters flow
Towards the foamin' leap.

The world is full o' wand'ring roads, an' I must
onward roam,
An' eat the bread o' grief upon the highways o'
the earth,
But my longin' is all for the wee white road that
leads to my boyhood's home,
In the green land of my birth.

AN APRIL DAY

AH ! how much lighter than the breath of Spring
My heart awakened to the April day.
With what a burst of joy the birds did sing
As if they knew that I kept holiday.

And I looked out to greet the radiant sky,
And saw the dust rise on the village street,
And from my heart there broke a sudden cry
As if it heard the far-off tread of feet,
The far-off tread of long-awaited feet.

THE MOTHER

I HAVE a whean o' stirrin' boys,
I'm fairly moithered wi' their noise,
They have the place desthroyed wi' dirt
An' aye a hole in shoe or shirt.
My waking hours is quare an' throng,
I stitch an' scour the whole day long.

It's many a clout they get from me,
An' hearty scoldin' full an' free,
I say "Ye have me fair distraught,
Not one of ye but's good-for-naught,
The luck's wi' them that has no child
For to annoy an' dhrive them wild."

Yet when the weans is all asleep,
I scarce can thole the silence deep,
An' many a time wi' lamp in hand
Up in their sleepin'-room I stand,
An' look at them in foolish dhread—
They lie so still, they might be dead.

An' if one wakes in quick affright
An' blinks to see the yellow light,
I feel a joy that's well-nigh pain,
An' kiss his wide eyes shut again.
Then creepin' out without a noise
I pray "God bless the darlin' boys!"

AT EASTER

THE little church is dim and still,
And through the windows tall
The sunbeams wander at their will,
And on the Altar fall.

Beside the Cross on either hand
With heads bowed as in pray'r,
The starry white narcissi stand
And perfume all the air.

Hush'd is the priest's low monotone ;
A silver chalice rings,
And in the churchyard all alone
A bird with rapture sings.

And I, with heart tired overmuch
With knowledge and with pain,
Have come Christ's garment-hem to touch,
And so be whole again.

VISIONS.

MOTHER, upon the little street,
I see the saints with silver feet,
Walking in converse high and wise
With all God's glory in their eyes.
Humbly they go about the world,
Their great wings on their shoulders furled,
Yet no one stops to gaze at them,
Or stroke a shining garment-hem.

*Hush, child. You see an empty road,
Nor saints nor angels pace abroad.*

Mother, upon the little street
I hear of horses' hoofs the beat ;
I see great warriors riding by,
Heavy of head, and dull of eye.
Their necks are bowed in mortal pain,
Their hands have dropped the bridle-rein,
Yet no one runs to help their need,
Or staunch those great red wounds that bleed.

*Hush, child. The street is still and bare,
No hoof-beat wakes an echo there.*

Mother, upon the little street
I see a queen with eyes most sweet,
A great chain binds her to her place,
The heavy tears run down her face,

And drop upon her 'broidered dress ;
Will no one aid in her distress
This captive queen who is so fair ?
Look ! Mother, look ! her golden hair !

*Hush, child. How should our little town
Prison a queen of high renown ?*

Mother, they pass before my eyes,
The sweet, the sorrowful, the wise,
While on their business to and fro,
The dull unseeing people go ;
But ah ! sleep knocks at my heart's door,
Where is your hand ?

*Here, here, astóir
Close up your tired eyes, my child,
Your brain is mazed with visions wild.
The saints of heaven send you rest,
Husho ! husho ! upon my breast.*

SORROW AND LOVE

SORROW and I have parted fellowship,
Sorrow and I have parted company ;
Now shall Life's golden hours as smoothly slip
As beaded pray'rs upon a rosary.

For Love stood waiting on the highway long,
And led me from the noise of hurrying feet,
Into a garden full of spice and song,
And wonder-flowers rich with nectar sweet.

I laughed aloud as laughs a child at play,
Dancing and singing through the golden land.
When lo ! There stood before me in the way
Sorrow and Love, linked lightly hand in hand.

GLENANAIR

THERE is a meadow where the murder'd saints
Lie folded fast in their eternal sleep ;
The wind above them makes its long complaints,
The dews of evening weep.

Wounded and spent, into the fields they crept,
Watching with dulling eyes their red wounds
drain ;
And one by one Death took them, and they slept,
And woke no more again.

But often in my dreams I see them rise
Pierced with their wounds, and stiff with old
black blood,
With deathless courage in their hollow eyes,
They stand where once they stood.

And cry aloud :—" Sweet has our slumber been,
And deep our rest after the fierce affray,
While o'er our heads the turf grew thick and green
And the years slipped away.

" But lo ! an ancient sorrow shook our rest
A cry of lamentation and of wrong,
And we arose from out the kind earth's breast,
Where we had slept so long.

“ If we had known, O people ! all your pain,
God be our Judge, we had not slumbered thus,
Look where we stand, ready to die again,
Hath Ireland need of us ? ”

Hath Ireland need ? She hath great need as then,
When in your anguish on the blood-wet sod,
Ye looked your last upon the quiet glen
And made your peace with God.

I TAKE YOUR LOVE

FOR a sword into my hand,
For a sign above my door,
For a word upon my mouth,
For a way my feet before.

For the road, and the road's-end,
For the work, and for the dream,
For the ship with straining sail,
For the harbour-lights that gleam

For a rest beside the way,
For a well of waters deep,
For a cup of crystal clear,
For a vision, and a sleep.

For the upward-winding track,
For the shining peaks above,
For all time, and for to-day
In God's Name—I take your love.







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